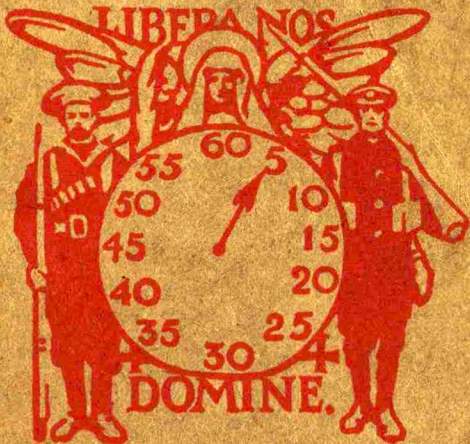


AN HOUR AT THE FRONT

By RONALD KNOX

Chaplain Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford



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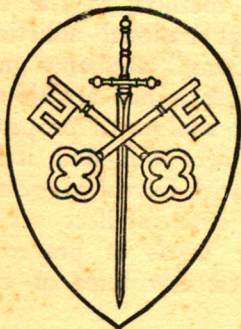
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AN HOUR AT THE FRONT

Fourth Impression making 45,000 copies

*Sic non potuistis una hora
vigilare mecum?*

Ev. Matt. xxvi. 40



PREFACE

THESE devotions are intended for those who either find the repetition of long vocal prayers wearying, or who, being accustomed rather to that inward prayer, which is not formed with the lips, are nevertheless conscious of some difficulty in adapting that method to the exigencies of a great national affliction. The "Suggestions" are only meant for those whose minds are slow to provide their souls with proper dispositions; others will find it easier to dispense with formal suggestions, and let their own intellect set to work upon the heads of prayer outlined in the first few lines of each Five Minutes.

It need hardly be pointed out, that though this devotion is so arranged as to occupy an hour by the clock, a very little adjustment will make it equally suitable either for a longer or a shorter period.

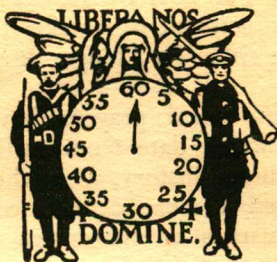
A few vocal prayers have been added, which date from earlier centuries in our history, when the nation possessed a more definite corporate consciousness in matters of religion than the individualism of our own age allows for.

In omnibus glorificetur Deus.

R. A. K.



FIRST FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for Victory for the arms of the country. (To God the Father.)

Suggestions.—Commend your country to the care of God *simply because it is your country*; and you are therefore bound to intercede on its behalf.

Then remember in the sight of God the justice of our cause; the cause of the Freedom of small nations, of

neutrality for those who wish to be neutral, that is, the cause of Peace.

“O God, thy Will be done ; prosper us, because we are doing thy Will as we see it. Nevertheless not our will, but thine, be done.”

Recall to yourself God's love of the weak things of the world, which he appoints to confound the wise ; recall to yourself the *Magnificat*. Think of one or two texts from the Psalms about the Omnipotence of God, his adjudgement of victory, his exalting the humble and the oppressed. With these in your mind, pray to God that he will pardon our sins, which cry to him for vengeance ; and, since he has seen fit to use us, unworthy as we are, as champions of his justice and pity, pray that he will exalt his holy Name before the whole world by giving us the Victory, if it be his Will.

SECOND FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for the relief of all suffering, and the avoidance of any great bloodshed. (To God the Son.)

Suggestions.—Recall the words of Jesus, “They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword”: confess on your own behalf, and on behalf of the nation, that this war is a just punishment for all your sins of hatred and ill-will.

But remind Jesus that he wept over the tomb of Lazarus, that he raised Jairus' daughter and the widow's son of Nain. Picture to yourself the danger of so many souls going out to battle unprepared for death ; picture to yourself the desolation of the mourner, and illustrate it to yourself by imagining some one you love dearly having died. Then pray to Jesus that the war may be finished, and victory secured, with as little suffering as possible ; by sinking of ships rather than men, by the fall of fortresses rather than of their defenders ; by the taking of captives, of guns, ammunition, etc. Pray to Jesus that, in so far as it is his holy Will, he will treat the life of every soldier on either side as being equally precious with that life which you value most upon earth.



THIRD FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for the speedy restoration of peace to the world. (To the Holy Spirit.)

Suggestions.—Think of the Holy Spirit moving on the face of the deep, and restoring order out of chaos. Think of him as being imparted by the Saviour with the words, "Peace be unto you." Think of him as annihilating all national distinctions in the Day of Pentecost.

Recall to yourself that he puts thoughts into the hearts of men, and not of those only who are Christians. Pray that he will keep us all from thoughts of hatred, which will delay the restoration of peace, or bring about war in the future; that he will put it into the hearts of statesmen everywhere to lose no opportunity for the securing of honourable agreement.

Confess how often in your own life you have grieved the Holy Spirit by doing or saying things calculated to promote dissension, ill feeling, or schism: confess that you, and your country, have neglected to give thanks as you ought for the preservation of peace; cry out to him that you have learned your lesson, and firmly resolve to offend no more in such ways; pray that the lesson may be learned speedily, and the chastisement speedily come to an end.

FOURTH FIVE MINUTES

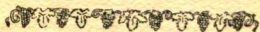


PRAY for our country's soldiers and sailors; for their courage, patience, mercifulness and continence.

Suggestions.—Picture to yourself a line of soldiers under fire, a sailor on look-out duty, the capture of a town. Unite your intercession with the desire of the Sacred Heart that all men should avoid sin; recall to yourself the courage of Jonathan, the patience of Isaiah waiting for the deliverance

of Israel, the mercifulness of Saint John Gualbert when he spared his enemy, the purity of our Blessed Lady.

Pray that all our soldiers and sailors may prove themselves worthy of England, and of our history, whether in victory or in defeat. Pray for the novices, the untried, whose hearts fail them at the moment of battle: that those who are tried by long waiting and suspense may have confidence and quietness; that our troops may never be tempted to wreak their vengeance on the helpless and the non-combatant; that whatever the temptations, especially in the hour of victory, they may preserve the fame of England and their own purity in the sight of God.



FIFTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for your own kindred and friends, whether at the front already, or defending our shores and waiting to be called to the front.

Suggestions.—Make an Act of Love to God, ranking him higher in your affections than any of his creatures. Thank him for the blessings of family and friendship, and acknowledge that they are his gift to you from moment to moment; resign yourself, if it be

his will, to lose all your dearest in this war ; submit yourself entirely to his will, inviting him to bereave you if he sees it best.

Then pray that of his mercy, according to his will, he will give his Angels charge over those you love, and bring them back safe from death and hurt. Pray that he will ease their afflictions, and keep them brave and loyal and free from sin ; that if they are Christians he will keep them in the faith in spite of these troubles ; if they are not Christians, he will bring them to it through these troubles. Remember, finally, that many others are praying specially for their own friends, and prefer to God the petitions of all such throughout the world.



SIXTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for the honour of God; the safeguarding of his Church, his priests, his worship; of all religious, and of all sacred buildings, especially of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Pray for all those who may die in this war without the Sacraments.

Suggestions.—Think of the terrible dangers of sacrilege—guns mounted on churches, convents used as army quarters. Pray that Churches may be spared, that Church worship may be

unhindered, priests not be prevented from the performing of their sacred functions, or religious disturbed in their round of prayer and praise. Pray that all possible means of grace and spiritual comfort may be supplied to the soldiers engaged in fighting; and ask God to supply the needs of those who cannot come by such spiritual assistance (and that for long spaces of time).

Pray especially for those who must die without the comfort of the Last Sacraments: and make an Act of spiritual Communion, asking God to accept it on behalf of all those who desire, and are unable to receive, the holy Viaticum. Make an act of reparation to Jesus, present in the Holy Eucharist, for all the injuries and irreverences that may be done to him, intentionally or unintentionally, in these troubles.

SEVENTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for all who are in deadly sin, on whom death may come suddenly in the course of this war, and for their speedy conversion.

Suggestions.—Acknowledge that it is due to our sins, to the sins of our country, to the sins of our whole civilization, that we owe the horrors of war: make confession of the carelessness, faithlessness, indifference, and luxury of our age, its neglect of the

Last Judgement, and forgetfulness of the shortness of life.

Pray for all who have gone out to take part in the war, or who may be involved in its fatal consequences, who are unprepared for death. Reflect on the terrible dangers of sudden and unprepared death ; of retribution in the world to come.

Implore the Loving Heart of Jesus, which burns for the salvation of all men, to regard the unselfishness and patriotism of those who have answered willingly the call of their countries, and count this as meritorious in them, uniting it with the satisfaction made for our sins on Calvary ; plead with Jesus the shortness of the time given to such souls to think of their eternal welfare, and pray him that he will therefore give them grace to repent before it is too late.

EIGHTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for all those on whom this war brings anxiety of any kind ; the friends and families of the combatants, the non-combatants in the area of fighting, those responsible for the management of countries and armies ; those who have lost or will lose in respect of their property, etc.

Suggestions.—Remind Jesus of the agony he underwent for our sakes in Gethsemane ; unite yourself with

him in bearing, as he bore then, all the sufferings of mortality ; wish that you might be allowed to suffer alone, so that others might be saved from suffering.

Pray for those who are anxious about friends or kinsfolk at the front, and can get no certain news of them : for those who may see their harvests wasted, their lands and factories destroyed, etc. : for statesmen and generals who have to suffer sleepless nights, continual anxiety, and the consciousness of unpopularity or failure : for all those who are out of work, or will suffer heavy losses by the dislocation of trade. Pray for all such, that they may put their trust in God, casting all their care on him ; may not give way to despair, to loss of self-control, above all to the temptation to self-destruction.

NINTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for mourners who have lost those they love, or will lose them in the course of the war, especially any you know.

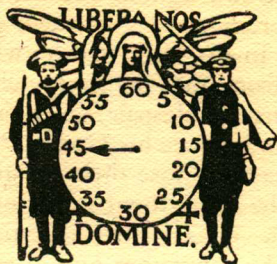
Suggestions.—Recall to yourself the sorrows of Mary as she saw her Son going on the way to Calvary, and as she stood beneath his Cross; the tears of Jesus over Lazarus, and the sorrows of Martha and Mary. Pray to Jesus that, out of the abundant consola-

tions of his Sacred Heart, he will comfort and lighten the affliction of all mourners, and give them grace to submit to his will; that he will keep them from the slightest yielding to that terrible despair, in which man turns and curses his God. Pray that they may not lose their religion, but rather be strengthened in it or drawn towards it, as their circumstances demand—remember here particularly any whom you know. Pray that such losses may not fall on young wives, on parents who have no other children, on unprotected families; pray that God will spare the young and the unfit for death.

“All those whom thy Love pities,
Lord, let thy Power defend.”



TENTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for the sick, the weary, and the wounded.

Suggestions.—Think of the difficulty of keeping soldiers at the front properly supplied with food; the exhaustion of so many prisoners; the accounts given of the Belgian soldiers who had been on their feet for two days without rest. Picture to yourself a hospital ward, and try to imagine yourself as feeling the parched lips

of fever, the sting and the ache of wounds, restlessness, headache, weakness. Remember the weariness of the Saviour as he fell under the weight of his Cross, and the sharp stab of the nails, his aching and fevered limbs as he hung on the Cross.

Pray to Jesus, by the virtue of these his sufferings, and of all the torments of his holy Martyrs and Confessors, that he will alleviate the pain of any who suffer in any of these ways, particularly those who are known to you. Pray for the doctors and the nurses, that they may have skill and patience. Pray that those who are to die may soon be delivered from their miseries, those who are to live soon restored to health. Remind Jesus of his miracles of healing; pray that those who suffer may make their sufferings meritorious by bearing them in union with his.

ELEVENTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for the dying; that their last passage may be comforted; that as many as possible may receive the consolations of religion; that sinners may repent in their last moments.

Suggestions.—Think of Jesus consigning his Spirit to his Father. Picture to yourself the fact that even now, as you pray, there are probably numbers of souls enduring the terrible agony of parting from their bodies, and few of them able to face the next world with sure confidence. Pray that those

who have sinned may repent, and that their sudden repentance may be accepted in consideration of the suddenness with which they are called on to face death. Pray that as many as possible may receive the benefit of Absolution; and that those who are unable to obtain it may be pardoned by a special exercise of God's mercy.

Remember your own past sins, and make as best you can a complete Act of Contrition for them, hating them purely because they displease God, and resolving to turn from them in future; and then ask God for Jesus' sake to accept this Act of Contrition on behalf of souls that cannot get Absolution in the battle-field. Repeat the Holy Name of Jesus several times, for those who will be unable to frame the word with their dying lips. "Heart of Jesus, brought into agony for us, pity all poor souls in their last agony."

TWELFTH FIVE MINUTES



PRAY for the dead, especially for any you have known on earth ; your relations, friends, and benefactors ; those whom you may have led into or encouraged in sin.

Suggestions.—Think how much we all sin, how little we all suffer in this world ; how much suffering must be needed to purify us in the next world before we can be fit for the presence of God. Think of the comparatively careless lives led by many you know,

who are now in danger of death ; think how small your own good deeds would look if they came to be reckoned up against your sins.

“Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.” Think of the poor souls in Prison, seeing now as they could not see, and we cannot see on earth, the enormity even of their lesser sins, waiting for release from their sufferings. Think especially of those you knew on earth, those for whom you are bound to pray ; remember that your prayers may, by the mercy of the Saviour who died for them, afford them a measure of relief. Remember the unity of the Church, and join your prayers with those of the triumphant Saints on behalf of your expectant brethren. “Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest, and let everlasting light shine upon them.”

SOME VOCAL PRAYERS

I

O KING of nations unto the end of the earth, strengthen all the commonwealths of the whole world, as thine institution, albeit the ordinance of man; scatter the peoples that delight in war, make wars to cease in all the world. Lord, on whom the isles do wait, and in whom they hope, deliver this island wherein we sojourn from all tribulation, peril, and necessity. Remember every Christian soul afflicted and oppressed and struggling and needing thy mercy and succour, and our brethren that are in captivities and in prisons and in bitter thraldoms; supplying return to the wanderers, health to the sick, deliverance to the

captives, and rest to them that have fallen asleep aforetime. Remember, O Lord, every principality and power, and our brethren at court, and them that are eminent in council and judicature, and all on land and sea waging thy wars for us. And all thy people remember, O Lord our God, and on all pour out thy rich pity, unto all imparting their petitions unto salvation. Deliver, O Lord, this city and all the country wherein we sojourn from famine, pestilence, earthquake, flood, fire, sword, onset of aliens, and civil factiousness. And for us, direct the end of our lives to be Christian, well-pleasing, and (if it like thee) painless in peace, Lord, O Lord, gathering us together under the feet of thine elect, when thou wilt and as thou wilt, only without shame and sins. Amen.

BISHOP ANDREWES.

II

FOR THOSE THAT ARE IN GREAT DISTRESS AND DANGER

O GOD of power and pity, who hast promised to regard the prayer of the destitute, and not to despise their cry, look down, O Lord, from thy sanctuary, from thy heavens do thou behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, and to loose those that are in danger of death; rescue them from the rage of violence, and shew thyself merciful to them in this time of their distress, O thou preserver of men. And grant them all graces and mercies needful for the saving of their souls, and let them glorify thee both in life and in death, and do thou glorify them with Life eternal, through the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord. In whose blessed Name I further beg

for mercy for all that suffer in these times of trouble, chiefly for those that are destitute, for the widows and fatherless; let thy mercy be extended to them, in the daily supplying of their several wants and necessities; take them into thy peculiar care, O thou Father of the fatherless, and Judge of the widow, and be thou their comfort, help, and succour, for Jesus Christ his sake. BISHOP KEN.

III

LORD, have mercy upon all miserable bodies: those that are ready to famish for want, feed them; those that are bound to beds of pain, loose them; those that are in prison and bands, release them; those that are under the fury of persecution, and cry under the yoke of oppression, relieve them; those that lie smarting in their pain and wounds, cure them.

Those that are distracted in their thoughts and wits, settle them ; those that are in peril of their estates and lives, preserve them. Jesus, that didst freely distribute thy comforts and cures to all miseries and maladies of men, when thou wast on earth, have mercy on all, and help them, far or near, with us or from us ; Lord, have mercy on all, even every son and daughter of Adam, at this time of pain and anguish upon the face of the earth, wherever they are, whosoever they be : what help I would pray for myself from thee, or comfort from man, in their condition, I beseech thee the God of all help and comfort to give it them ; take them to thy care, and tender them ; supply them, and succour them ; have compassion on them, and heal them, I beseech thee for thine infinite mercies' sake. Amen.

BISHOP KEN.

